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Sierra Club Iowa Chapter Files Intervention in Pattison Sand Appeal

Pattison Sands Project Threatens the Jordan Aquifer

Cedar Rapids, IA.

On Tuesday, October 6, The Iowa Chapter of the Sierra Club filed an intervention with the Iowa Department of Inspections and Appeals concerning a Pattison Sand proposal that threatens the Jordan Aquifer.

Pattison Sands has requested a permit to pump millions of gallons of water from the Jordan Aquifer to ship and sell out-of-state for their private profits.

Sierra Club members believe that if approved, the project will have dire consequences on the already-threatened Jordan Aquifer and opens the door to allow private companies to profit off of Iowan’s shared public resource.

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has denied three permit requests so far because Pattison Sand can’t prove that this is a beneficial use of the state’s water in the interest of the people. To date, Pattison won’t disclose where the water is going, who will receive it, and what it is for.

“This project is shrouded in secrecy which should send a red flag to all Iowans. Our public resources are not for sale and should not be used for private profits,” stated Jess Mazour, Conservation Coordinator for the Iowa Sierra Club.

Sierra Club members say, if approved, the proposal could have catastrophic consequences for 500,000 Iowans who rely on the Jordan Aquifer for drinking water. A 2014 analysis of the Jordan Aquifer showed that it is threatened by current water uses because water is being pumped out of the aquifer faster than it can recharge. The DNR has already placed restrictions on new wells in three Iowa Counties (Johnson, Linn, and Webster) due to the growing threat.

Pattison Sand now appears to be lobbying the Governor’s Office to pressure DNR to allow them to evade current regulations, like showing a beneficial use of public resources and by redirecting water they currently pump from the mining operation into the Mississippi River, to be shipped and sold out-of-state.

Pattison Sand says the Mississippi River won’t miss this water but Sierra Club members say otherwise. “Pattison Sands currently discharges up to 566 million gallons of water annually into the Mississippi. If that water is redirected we could see a higher concentration of nutrients going downstream to the Gulf of
Mexico or dangerously low water levels during drought times.” Mazour said. “There is nothing about this proposal that benefits Iowans or our environment.”

Wally Taylor, Legal Chair, states “Pattison’s legal argument is that Pattison owns the water under its land. But Iowa law is clear that groundwater is a public resource for the benefit of all Iowans.”

Sierra Club members call on Governor Reynolds and the Iowa DNR to deny Pattison Sands’ appeal because one of Iowa’s most precious resources should not be used for private profits. The appeal hearing is set for November 9-10, 2020.

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